



Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service Division of Operations Emergency Medical and Integrated Healthcare Services

Office of Medical Oversight Clinical Practice Guideline

Title:	Discontinuation of Ammonia Inhalants	Number:	2022 – 04
Date:	November 3, 2022		
Issued by:	Roger M. Stone MD, MS – MCFRS Medical Director		
Purpose:	To align the application of painful stimuli by MCFRS clinicians with the best available medical evidence		
Target Patient Population:	All patients		
Guideline:	<p>The Maryland Medical Protocols for Emergency Medical Services does not include the use of ammonia inhalants. The administration of ammonia inhalants is not considered by MCFRS as an approved medical intervention or procedure, nor are ammonia inhalants on the state or county formulary.</p> <p>The essential guiding tenet of EMS is to <i>do no harm</i>. Ammonia is a poisonous chemical and despite being dissolved in smelling salts, placing them too close to a patient's nose is neither healthy nor safe. The use of ammonia inhalants place patients at risk as ammonia (NH₃) is a direct respiratory irritant.</p> <p>When an ammonia capsule is opened under a patient's nose, the irritative effect on nasal and pharyngeal mucus membranes produce a sudden, vehement avoidance response. Patients with respiratory distress or airway compromise due to airway edema may acutely worsen with administration of this drug.</p> <p>The administration of Ammonia Inhalants to our patients for any reason at any time is discontinued. Furthermore, clinicians are not sanctioned to carry a non-formulary substance for patients on their units or on their person.</p> <p>Appropriate methods for assessing response to pain are illustrated in this article and include sternal rub or pressure point application. Clinicians are cautioned to only apply enough painful stimulus necessary to conduct the assessment.</p> <p>Questions may be directed to any assigned EMS Duty Officer.</p>		